

An Outsider's Perspectives on Asian Canadian Studies: A Response to Donald Goellnicht

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It is my great honor to have been invited to respond to Donald Goellnicht's paper, which delineates the ongoing formation of Asian Canadian studies in ways quite different from those of Asian American studies. Looking at the title of his paper—"Outside the U.S. Frame: Asian Canadian Perspectives"—I have wondered whether perhaps I should call my response as "Outside the 'Asian Canadian' Frame: 'Taiwanese' Perspectives." However, I have decided that it makes more sense to respond to the issue of "Asian Canadian" more generally from an "outsider's" position. After defining this position, I will first discuss the necessity of "Asian Canadian studies" as an institution, and then explain that it is equally productive to see "Asian Canadian" as a diasporic space of communication and of multiple intersections that can be extended outward.

Different situations or positions will indeed make us situate Asian Canadian studies rather differently. For Goellnicht, one of the major academics involved in carving out Asian Canadian studies as a discipline, mapping its terrain and forming its canon matter, as does its visibility as a distinct academic subject. Therefore, for him, "[one] institutional challenge that anyone teaching Asian Canadian literature in Canada faces is the already-existing incorporation of South Asian material into courses that were initially labelled 'Commonwealth Literature' (i.e., the British Commonwealth) and later 'Postcolonial Literature'" (90). On the other hand, for myself as a student, researcher and teacher of Canadian postcolonial literature in Taiwan, putting Asian Canadian texts in a broader context, without losing their socio-historical specificities, is a matter of necessity. When I was first assigned to conduct Canadian postcolonial studies as part of a research team, I strategically chose to study postcolonial texts from the perspectives of three ethnic